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The Different Philosophies of Higher Education

Sharifuzah Osman^{*a}, Fauziah Md. Taib^b, Siti Nabiha Abdul Khalid^c

^a*School of Government, College of Law, Government & International Studies,
Universiti Utara Malaysia*

^b*School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia*

^c*Graduate Business School, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia*

Corresponding author* fuzah@uum.edu.my

Abstract

Blackmore, Brennan, and Zipin (2010) and Rytmeister and Marshall (2007) claimed that many academic studies had been conducted to understand the philosophies of higher education or the purpose, the aims, or missions of higher education. A closer investigation found that most of the discussions mostly centered on the academic and market philosophies of higher education, while disregards the other philosophies of higher education. This include, the public, religion and cultural philosophy of higher education. Given that, the discussion on higher education philosophy often led to the tendency to treat HEIs as similar entities without recognising their differences and plurality. Recognising the different philosophies of higher education is crucial since different governance mechanism is needed to provide flexibility to the institution to fulfil diverse demand for higher education. Otherwise, suboptimal outcomes may be experienced by the HEIs, the state, and the whole society. To enrich the discussion on the higher education philosophy, this paper discusses the different philosophies of higher education found around the globe.

Keywords: Philosophies of Higher Education, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Market, Academic, Public, Religious and Cultural Philosophy of Higher Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Blackmore, Brennan, and Zipin (2010) and Rytmeister and Marshall (2007) claimed that many academic studies had been conducted to understand the philosophy of higher education or also known as the purpose, and mission of higher education. Many of the previous studies (Canhilal, Lepori, & Seeber, 2016; Lepori, 2016; Upton & Warshaw, 2017; Rytmeister & Marshall, 2007; Jensen, 2001) however tend to emphasised on market and academic philosophy of higher education to the point that HEIs are assumed and treated as similar entities. A closer investigation however found that many HEIs have been set up for various reasons beyond market and academic purposes. In some countries, HEIs have been established for purposes of nation-building, national unity, social equity, and social values. HEIs have also been formed to address the needs of marginalised groups, such as the Black American people and people living in rural area in the United State (the US) through the establishment of a system of higher education known as the land-grant universities. Similar practice also found in Malaysia. Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for instance was set up for the *Bumiputera* (native people or ‘sons of the soil’) community aim at provide better socio-economic opportunity to the group (Osman, Taib & Abd. Khalid, 2014; Shaari, 2011). Some HEIs have been established to preserve or retain specific cultures or tribes, such as in Uganda, Philippines, and Columbia (Life

Mosaic, 2020; Asian Development Bank, 2012; Muwagga, 2011). Around the globe many HEIs are operated for propagating spiritual doctrines such as Christianity, Confucianism, and Islam (Li, 2016; Muwagga, 2011; Makdisi, 1971). Similarly, in countries where democracy and liberal values are of great importance, HEIs are established to promote individual liberalism and democratic values. The variation of higher education philosophy suggests that the notion that HEIs exist simply on the philosophy of higher education of either academic or market alone is hard to sustain and is oversimplified in reality. Often, this notion leads to the perception that there is only one similar set of governance and performance measures to address the demand of the academic and market-based philosophies of higher education. This paper therefore discusses the different philosophies of higher education around the globe.

2. PHILOSOPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Philosophy of higher education stems from a specific perspective or paradigm, and subjected to the different knowledge, experience, exposure, surroundings, or context that a society holds. Hence, although it is possible it is hard to imagine that all these HEIs are operated for just market or academic philosophy of higher education. In fact, it is found that within the seemingly similar higher education environment, there are possibilities that multiple philosophies could be at work. A closer investigation found that the philosophies of higher education could be classified into at least five different types of philosophy of higher education. These are, religious, academic, public, market and cultural as shown in the following Table 1.

2.1 Different Philosophies of Higher Education: Not a Single Strong and Cohesive Philosophy of Higher Education

Table 1 Five Types of Philosophy of Higher Education

PHILOSOPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATION	ROOT	MAIN PURPOSE
Religious / denominational oriented university	Chinese, Christian and Muslim Communities	Good human being
Academic / Scholarship / Professional / Intellectual	Medieval universities Humboldtian & Napoleonic; Islam; Confucianism	Scholarship purpose
Public	German / Chinese	Political purpose, state's socio-economic development
Market (Managerial)	Neoliberalism > Market & Economic Rationalisation	Economic prosperity
Cultural or Community University	a specific community such as in Uganda and Cambodia	Retain traditional indigenous values

Source: Dugas, et al. (2018); Lepori (2016); Li (2016); Muwagga (2011); Carnegie & Tuck (2010); Mora, 2010; Jensen (2001).

Religious Philosophy of Higher Education

In the early period of time where religion played a more significant role in human life, many HEIs were mostly set up based for religious or denominational philosophy of higher education. It is possible to mention that almost all of the main religion around the globe have HEIs set up based on their religious principles. However, in this paper only Confucianism (5th century); Islam (7th century); and Christianity (end of 13th century) were discussed. The selection of the three religions is because;

- i. they are still relevant and widely operate in many parts of the world. Examples include Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Taiwan, Singapore, China, Thailand, the US, and the UK;
- ii. there is a large body of theoretical literature; and
- iii. they have centuries of existence.

(Li, 2016; Drechsler, 2015; Asian Development Bank, 2012; Marginson, 2010).

Religious-based philosophy of higher education does not merely mean for inculcating religious tradition or to serve a religious community and train the spirituality of the community members (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Makdisi). It is also found that the religious-based philosophy is meant to fulfilling different needs for higher education other than mentioned earlier this include political purpose. Despite, the wide variety of religious-based philosophy of higher education the ultimate aim of this philosophy of higher education is to develop human human as a good human being – the knowledgeable, and skilful professionals with high moral and spiritual standards (Muwagga, 2011; Isahak, 2007; Makdisi, 1971). In achieving this ultimate aim, religious teaching becoming the main element that underpin the operation of an institution of higher learning.

The following sub-section elaborates each of the religious-philosophical orientation.

The Confucian Philosophy of Higher Education

The Chinese civilisation had established their Confucius system of higher education which could be traced back to the 12th – 8th BC (Li, 2016; Isahak, 2007). The Confucius-based HEIs system was set up for political purpose. Drechsler (2013) mentioned that the Imperial government believed that the centralised, and a uniform system of bureaucratic administration will be competent and efficient by having a benevolence, loyalty, respectfulness, magnanimity, kindness, wisdom, courage, diligence, tolerance, filial piety, and respects for the elderly – a good government officials. Laws and regulations were required. Yet they are not the main structure that guarantee the smooth running of governance offices (Li, 2016; Isahak, 2007). HEIs were set up with the Confucius

principles becoming the core element to educate and training professionals. This led to the establishment of a centralised or imperial system of higher education comprised of several institutes. The oldest known as the *Taixue* (Confucian Institute) or the imperial university system, acknowledges as the first based--HEI set up firstly by the Han Dynasty in 124 BCE, 1000 years earlier than the existence of the Al-Azhar University (970 CE). The Confucian Institute was carried forward by the other dynasties such as the Guozixue in the Western Jin Dynasty (265-313 CE), the Guozisi in the Northern Qi Dynasty (550-577 CE) or the Guozijian in the Song Dynasty (960-1056 CE) and ended during the collapse of the Qing Empire (1644-1912 CE) (Li, 2016). Despite the *Taixue* Chinese civilization was also flourished with specialized imperial HEIs. This include, the *Shuxue* (Institute of Calligraphies), the *Suanxue* (Institute of Mathematics), the *Wuxue* (Institute of Martial Arts), the *Yixue* (Institute of Medicine) and the *Lixue* (Institute of Laws) (Li, 2016)

In the current setting, Confucian teachings and values that emphasise on the development of virtuous and ethical individuals, known as the humanist (*Zhi-Xing*) mission, is still visible and practiced by several Confucianism inherited nations (Li, 2016; Cai, 2012; 2009; 2004; Marginson, 2010). Apart from China, the Confucian teachings and values are also widespread in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam (Li, 2016; Marginson, 2010). In the pursuit of global recognition, the Confucian-based HEIs are currently incorporating market and economic policies for various adaptations to the changing times and demands from the stakeholders at hand (Li, 2016; Cai, 2012; 2009; 2004).

The Islamic Philosophy of Higher Education

Islam came to the Arab societies in the 7th century through Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The philosophy of higher education in Islam is meant for producing good human beings with moral ethics or *adab* (Al-Attas, 1980; Wan Daud, 2013). Al-Attas (1980) described *adab* as self-discipline, whilst Wan Daud (2013) equated *adab* with self-improvement. Overall, *adab* is the ability of human beings to discipline themselves through the teaching and learning processes that they undertake. The fundamental basis for developing an individual as a Muslim with *adab* is embedded in the doctrine of *Tawheed* (Goddard, 2000; Waardenburgh, 1965). *Tawheed* means to “regard as one” or “unify;” the oneness of God (Al-Attas, 1980; Wan Daud, 2013) or the unity of God (Osman, 2010; Sardar, 1991). Wan Daud, (2013) stated that *Tawheed* is not merely a doctrine, but also the code of conduct for Muslims. The *Tawheed* doctrine is imparted in the Islamic philosophy of higher education. Given this description, the advancement and transmission of knowledge are propelled towards being closer to the cognisant presence of God. It is a progressive process that allows a Muslim to feel the figurative existence of God, consciously within themselves. Once they feel this divine consciousness, they would be able to self-govern themselves; hence, becoming a Muslim with *adab* – a good Muslim. Not so many rules and regulations are required once an individual obtains this spiritual value. This value guides a Muslim to live a good life where they are able to respect others, their families, society (the *ummah*), contribute greatly to the development of the state, and sustain the environment (Makdisi, 1981; Waardenburgh, 1965).

Until today, several Muslim HEIs of the past are still exist and contribute significantly to the development of the *ummah* and their respective nation-state. Among them are the Al-Qarawiyyin University in Morocco, established in 859 CE; and the University of al-Azhar in Egypt, established in 970-972 CE, and the Nizamiyya Academy in Baghdad, founded in 1091 CE. Islamic-based HEIs, which are directed for Islamic philosophical orientation, have also flourished in other parts of the world like Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Similar to that of the Confucian and Christian HEIs, market and economic rationalisation is currently influencing the system. This can be seen through the adoption of curriculum that is driven by market and industrial demands (Asian Development Bank, 2012).

The Christian Philosophy of Higher Education

The Christian philosophy of higher education directed HEIs for a religious purpose (Li, 2016; Muwagga, 2011; Denham, 2002; Makdisi, 1971). The main focus is to serve the church, to preserve the Christian doctrine, to teach, and to inculcate students with Christian teachings and values to make them become clergies or good human beings with Christian ethics and values (Clarke, Hough & Stewart, 1984; Boggs, 2010; Muwagga, 2011; Makdisi, 1971). The root of this higher education philosophy could be traced back to the establishment of medieval European universities – such as universities in Paris and the Bologna around the 13th century (Mora, 2010; Cowen, 2002; Altbach, 1998; Berdahl, 1990).

Academic Philosophy of Higher Education

The academic philosophy of higher education concerns with the use of knowledge (Birnbaum, 2004; Jensen, 2001). For many, the academic philosophy of higher education is considered as the earliest tradition of HEIs in medieval societies. The medieval societies, associate academic philosophy of higher education with autonomous scholars, or masters who were granted with higher authority and privileges to organise their teaching and learning activities, and as the group of people to have founded the medieval HEIs - Paris and Bologna around the 13th century. (Mora, 2010; Boggs, 2010; Altbach, 1998; Albrecht & Zideman, 1992). This assumption is, however, rejected by several scholars (e.g., Li, 2016; Boggs, 2010; Anzar, 2003). Considerable control of the church (i.e., the Papacy) and the royals in administration and scholarship activities, constant threats from the locals have greatly limited academic activities are amongst the factors that dispute the previous notion (Anzar, 2003; Berdahl, 1990; Makdisi, 1971). By the end of the 18th century, the Western world was overwhelmed with the concept of academic freedom introduced by the German. The German through their highly controlled and centralised Humboldtian system of higher education introduced the concept of academic freedom whereby academicians were granted with autonomous status that provided flexibility for them to exercise their academic activities. For the German the centralised system with autonomous scholars was meant for producing good, productive, and obedient population aimed at establishing a positive link between the centralised state and its citizen has infused the concept of academic freedom within the context of academic philosophy of higher education (Ward, 2006; Borhan, 2009). The

concept academic freedom was later applied and led to the establishment of new HEIs in US and the UK (Altbach, 2009; 2004; Keohane, 1999; Carpenter, 1953). The academic freedom becoming the core element of the academic philosophy of higher education of HEIs of the US and the UK (henceforth known as the Western context). Unlike the Germans, where academic philosophy and academic freedom were in place to serve the needs of the newly-independent nation to produce obedient German citizens, the academic philosophy of the West commonly refers to the orientation of HEIs on creation, reservation, and transmission of knowledge through teaching, learning, and research activities mainly for scholarship purposes (Li, 2016; Birnbaum, 2004; Carnegie & Tuck, 2010; Chambers, 2017; Osman et al., 2014; Scott, 2006). In other words, knowledge is a means to an end. These days, the academic philosophy of higher education conceptualised by the West has risen as one of the most influential philosophies of higher education. Around the globe, this philosophical orientation has been adopted and adapted by many countries due to colonisation, marketisation, westernisation, and globalisation (Osman et al., 2014; Scott, 2006; Selvaratnam, 1985). This has caused a tendency to assume that the philosophical orientation of HEIs is always under the academic philosophy of higher education, specifically directed for scholarship, intellectual knowledge, professionalism, or research endeavours.

Public Philosophy of Higher Education

The emergence of HEIs for political reasons; national ideologies; national interest; and nation-building, as identified in the Chinese Imperial government era and in the 18th century newly independent nation-states like Germany and France, signal the establishment of HEIs with the public philosophy of higher education (Li, 2016; Mora, 2010). Fundamentally, the public philosophy of higher education aims for political purposes, which involve the government's interference in the provision of higher education (Li, 2016; Muwagga, 2011). The government, as the legitimate political authority, is granted with an exclusive duty or responsibility to enhance socio-economic conditions of the population who live within their local political-administrative system through higher education (Li, 2016; Muwagga, 2011; Mora, 2010; Fallis, 2005). The establishment of HEIs for political purposes is different across and between HEIs. It is subjected to the political-administrative system adopted by a state (centralised or decentralised), the authority granted, the country's cultural context, and the worldview on the purpose of higher education held by the state. Globally, different HEIs are being set up with philosophies of higher education linked to serving political purposes. Several variations of political purposes need to be fulfilled by such HEIs. Apart from creating an efficient public service system with highly professional and ethical bureaucrats, such as the case of the Confucian higher education system, or for producing a good relationship between citizens and the state, like the 18th century German nation, the public philosophy of higher education is also concerned with various and different political purposes, along with creating, preserving, and transmitting knowledge, like HEIs in Australia (Li, 2016; Mora, 2010; Carnegie & Tuck, 2010; Borhan, 2009). Examples can be seen in the unification of demographically and culturally diverse population, especially in countries with heterogeneous races and tribes; individual and national development; national survival; access to higher education due to massification; the extended benefits of higher

education to marginalised groups, such as rural and low-income students, rural poor, family farmers, small-town business owners, African-American population, and farmworkers; nationalisation; social equity; social equality; social justice; national security; human capital development for knowledge-based industries; and many others (Lau & Azmi, 2020; Li, 2016; Muwagga, 2011; Mora, 2010; Scott, 2006; Sirat, 2009; Woodward, 2008; Fallis, 2005). The variations in the political purpose of higher education are subjected to the political-administrative system of a state (centralised or decentralised), the state constitution, its demographically and culturally diverse population, its historical context, and the paradigm that underpins the state's needs for higher education.

Within the field of higher education dominated by globalisation and marketisation ideologies, a state's involvement in the provision of higher education is currently inclined towards market and economic ideologies (Lau & Azmi, 2020; Li, 2016; Hazelkorn, 2012; Sirat, 2009). Internationalisation, human capital development to spur knowledge-based industries, and competitiveness in the global market, have transitioned higher education into becoming as a potential social sector to be exported through the adoption of various economic and market-friendly policies initiated under the New Public Management (NPM) flagship, signalling many governments' paradigm shift with regard to HEIs.

Market Philosophy of Higher Education

The market (managerial or utilitarian) philosophy of higher education is concerned with the operation of HEIs for economic prosperity by capitalising academic or knowledge activities such as teaching, learning, and research (Dugas, et al. 2018; Shields & Westermeyer, 2018; Osman et al., 2014; Carnegie & Tuck, 2010). The market philosophy of higher education is derived from the neoliberalism ideology and economic rationalisation. The promotion of self-maximisation through the market with limited government control is greatly emphasised by this ideology. This is because the market is seen as an efficient platform that can fulfil individual and national requirements, not the government's needs. This is due to the political-administrative approach of the government, such as bureaucracies (rules and regulations) and political interference, which often causes inefficiency through the delayed decision-making, corruption, principal-agent dilemma, etc. in delivering high standards and quality of higher education services to the people (Osman, 2019). Thus, according to this ideology, governmental interference in the economy and the market must be limited. During the economic crisis in the 1980s, the idea of market started to become infused into the public sector under the label commonly known as NPM. The main aim was to enhance the public sector's efficiency by limiting government control. This is done by reducing the traditional political-bureaucratic approaches, and infusing public sector with market-based businesses and corporate approaches (Alam Siddiquee, 2010; Osman 2019). Hence, the NPM is largely regarded as the adoption of business and corporate principles aimed at enhancing the public sector's efficiency through various economic and market approaches.

Public sector reforms through the NPM took off in the 1980s with the UK government and local governments in the US, paving the way towards the transformation. Later, almost all countries around the globe accepted and implemented NPM in their

countries. This transformation was later infused into HEIs to attain the similar objective achieved by the public sector.

Within the context of higher education, the government or state-led higher education is viewed as inefficient in fulfilling the various requirements of the individuals, the society, the economy, politics, globalisation, and internationalisation (Osman, 2019). NPM is infused led to a change of paradigm, in terms of viewing students as customers instead of citizens, whose self-maximisation needs should be fulfilled (Ferlie et al., 2008). Thus, the private sector's involvement in providing higher education through the relaxation of rules and procedures has been realised through the privatisation and corporatisation of higher education, and the creation of buffer bodies or autonomous agencies responsible for overseeing the operation of HEIs (Osman, 2019; Ferlie et al., 2008; Ka, 2007). These NPM strategies are expected to reduce the government's interference in higher education; the government only functions to advise instead of manage HEIs, (Birnbaum, 2004). This allows a greater institutional autonomy to HEIs, especially to the board of directors (BODs), whose aim is to expedite decision-making processes in HEIs. The granted institutional autonomy comes together with various performance-based accountability measures, which emerge in the form of result-based management (i.e. in the form of key performance indicators or KPIs, and strategic planning), and audit system, that may hold BODs accountable for decisions made. This reflects the notion of autonomy with accountability in HEIs. Institutional capacity is further accelerated through managerialism (Osman, Taib & Abd. Khalid 2013; Osman, 2019; Ferlie et al., 2008).

Managerialism or the adoption of business and corporate principles, intends to enhance the efficiency of HEIs similar to that of business and corporate entities (Osman et al., 2013). This NPM characteristic is visible through the concept of allowing managers to self-govern, by providing authority to HEIs' top management such as vice-chancellors and their deputies; and quality-based culture, such as client charters, ISO, and the establishment of institutional vision, mission, and objectives (Osman, 2019; Ferlie et al., 2008; Ka, 2007).

Competition across and between HEIs is stimulated through national and international rating and ranking exercises, where funding is based on local and international rating and ranking system, as well as reduced government funding. Therefore, HEIs must embark on entrepreneurial activities, which will lead to the commercialisation of institutional services; commercialisation of scholarship activities such as teaching and learning; commercialisation through patenting, licensing, private partnerships, contracts, consultations, and others; imposition of fees; and establishment of subsidiary companies by HEIs (Upton & Warshaw, 2018). A corporate governance structure, which involves board members from the corporate and business sector as part of the institutional BODs, replaces the existing governance structure (Ferlie et al., 2008).

Other Philosophies of Higher Education

The least mentioned but still significant is the cultural philosophy of higher education (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Muwagga, 2011). This philosophical orientation is concerned with the provision of higher education for a specific ethnicity,

community, or tribe (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Muwagga, 2011). Sustaining and enhancing traditional indigenous values and accessing higher education mainly for a specific community are the main reasons of establishing HEIs in this philosophy of higher education. HEIs with this philosophical orientation exist in countries such as Uganda, Philippines, Cambodia, and Malaysia (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Muwagga, 2011). For example, Uganda HEIs, such as the Mutesa 1 Royal University established by the Mengo government of the Baganda tribe in central Uganda, the Kabale University established by the Kigezi-Bakiga community of South Western Uganda, and the Mountain of the Moon University established by the Fort Portal community of Western Uganda, are all intended to assist specific people of the region (Muwagga, 2011). In the Philippines, the Pamulaan University, and the Misak indigenous people from the south of Columbia founded HEI for producing indigenous graduates with the market and culturally relevant knowledge (Life Mosaic, 2020). The existence of UKM in Malaysia for preserving the Malay language through intellectual activities is one of the examples of cultural-based HEIs in this country (Syed Hasan Shahabudin, 2007).

3. CONCLUSION

HEIs are set up for different philosophies of higher education other than market and academic philosophy of higher education. These two philosophies of higher education are widely adopted, adapted and practice by almost all HEIs around the globe especially through colonisation at first. Through globalisation these two philosophies of higher education are strengthening and emerged as well-established structure within a HEI. Given that the main spotlight is always flash to these two philosophies of higher education. Nonetheless, a closer investigation found that, HEIs are not merely operated based on these philosophies of higher education. Around the globe, the setting up of HEIs based on public, religious, and cultural are found to be highly significant in fulfilling the various needs for higher education. Recognising the different philosophy of higher education is crucial. Past research indicate that a one-size-fits-all policy may produce suboptimal outcomes since HEIs that are set up for different philosophy of higher education require different form of governance and is intended to achieve difference performance measures that might be different from that of imposed by a specific policy of higher education.

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